



## I warned about antibacterial soap 13 years ago

January 17, 2014 • Dr. Micozzi

Thirteen years ago, a science reporter for the *Sunday New York Times*, interviewed me about the growing trend of “extreme hygiene.” We talked a lot about the popularity of antibacterial products. I told her that I thought all antibacterial agents were worthless. A marketing scam. And possibly even dangerous.

You see, a few years prior to that interview, my daughter and I had performed a simple experiment for her middle school science fair. After we were out and about all day, we came home and washed our hands using different methods. Next, we swabbed our hands to take microbial samples. And then cultured (grew) the samples in petri dishes. Afterwards, we took samples from the petri dishes to see what microbes remained.

We found that water all by itself removed more than 90 percent of the germs. Regular soap and water removed about 99 percent of the germs. And the “antibacterial” soap removed about 99 percent as well.

But there was one very important difference.

The bacteria left behind after we washed with soap and water looked normal. But the bacteria left behind after using antibacterial soap looked virulent—the kind that are resistant to antibiotics.

This simple experiment led me to wonder whether the profusion of “antibacterial” soaps was leading to the breeding of more dangerous bacteria. Just as the overuse of antibiotics led to the emergence of dangerous resistant strains of bacteria. So I told the reporter about my theory.

After the *Times*' article came out, my colleagues at the College of Physicians in Philadelphia accused me of “jumping to conclusions.”

Well, it took a little over a decade, but science now shows I was right to be concerned.

Current research now indicates antibacterial soaps aren't any more effective than regular soap and water. In fact, they appear to be counter-productive when it comes to infection. And my theory that antibacterial soap breeds more dangerous strains of bacteria appears entirely correct. Plus, to make matters worse, many antibacterial products contain toxic chemicals that affect your hormonal balance and can harm your health.

Even the FDA is finally catching on.

In fact, last month the FDA announced that manufacturers of antibacterial hand soaps must eventually demonstrate that their products are safe and more effective than plain soap and water in order to keep selling them.

Manufacturers have sold these products for two decades now. But they have no scientific evidence that their products work better than soap and water. Nor has safety data ever been submitted to the FDA.

If they can't demonstrate data on these two counts, manufacturers will have to remove the “antibacterial” agents from their products—and remove any antibacterial claims from their product's labeling.

And that's great news.

Unfortunately, the FDA will not publish a final version of these regulations until September 2016. And then, the regulations won't take effect until September 2017.

Now, let's think about that...

I warned about the dangers of antibacterial agents in the *New York Times* back in 2001. The FDA informed manufacturers of its concerns in 2009. And we won't have FDA regulations on these dangerous products until 2017.

That's almost 20 years to get something done! Sounds about right. (So, nobody can accuse FDA of “jumping to conclusions!”)

But as I'll explain in detail in the upcoming February issue of my *Insiders' Cures* newsletter, scientists in the UK say the crisis is upon us now.

Roughly 2,000 antibacterial products on the market today contain triclocarban and triclosan. These toxic chemicals disrupt hormones. In lab studies, researchers found that these agents decrease thyroid hormones. They also appear to decrease the ability for cells to respond normally to estrogen and testosterone.

So until the FDA finally takes a stand against these products in 2017, be aware, they're still out there.

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And avoid anything that contains an "antibacterial" agent. Especially anything that's got triclocarban and triclosan in it.

Instead, use plain old soap and water. (And remember, even plain water works wonders when you don't have soap available, according to my own experiments!)

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